



Northeast Regional Ocean Council

Request for Proposals: Sector-Specific Workshops in Support of Ocean Planning in New England

RFP Issued: February 24, 2012

Proposals Due: March 20, 2012

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Part 1: Scope of Work

- 1. Statement of Purpose:** The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) is seeking proposals for contractor assistance to assist in implementing a series of workshops in support of ocean planning in New England. Consistent with the NROC approach to ocean planning, through engagement of marine and ocean resource user groups, this project will result in improved information for ocean planning in New England, and provide an opportunity to engage certain key user groups about ocean planning in New England. This work is in addition to other NROC efforts that are engaging additional marine-related interests (such as commercial fishing and recreational uses) which are outside the scope of this Request for Proposals.
- 2. Background:** NROC, established by New England's Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership to implement solutions to New England's most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states include Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Interior (U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have been full members of NROC since its inception.

In recent years, NROC has focused on ocean planning. NROC has led the New England region's implementation of important parts of the National Ocean Policy and has developed a work plan and framework for regional ocean planning (see the NROC web site <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/default.aspx>). Within the past 18 months, to help achieve its goals, NROC has brought on additional capacity through hiring of staff and in-kind support from member agencies.

- 3. Objective:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) will directly support NROC's work plan through its deliverables and engagement with marine/ocean stakeholders. The primary objective of this RFP is to seek assistance in the design and implementation of a process to help NROC and the region's stakeholders understand the trends and potential issues associated with particular sectors of human activity in the marine environment. NROC's purpose with this objective is to develop technically-sound information that enables a deeper understanding of the regional ocean planning-related issues associated with types of marine activity and development which are occurring, or likely to occur, in New England waters. Examples of current and future activity/ development

include maritime commerce, energy (including renewable energy) and associated infrastructure, aquaculture, and other current and reasonably foreseeable human uses which are increasingly looking to use ocean resources and space. A main focus of this work is to understand current and future trends in such activities, and to understand associated potential regional impacts and benefits. Note that NROC has other aspects of its work plan which are focused on uses such as commercial fishing and recreational activities, as well as natural resources and ecosystem issues. Thus, NROC anticipates engagement and development of information related to those issues to occur through other related efforts.

NROC encourages creative approaches for this work. For the sake of simplicity in this RFP, NROC is using the term “workshop” but respondents are encouraged to propose the most appropriate approach to meeting this objective.

Proposals should include a clear description of the measures that will be used to ensure appropriate engagement with necessary stakeholders. Finally, NROC will consider proposals that address all or a portion of the marine sectors described herein. To reduce contracting burden, however, NROC encourages respondents interested in a single sector/issue to consider teaming with other entities.

Further information on the tasks intended to meet this objective is provided below.

Task 1. Design sector-specific workshops. For this task, the successful respondent will work closely with NROC to design sector-specific workshops. NROC anticipates that workshops will be developed to discuss issues related to transportation (ports and shipping), energy (including renewable energy) and infrastructure (cables, pipelines, etc.), and aquaculture. The purpose of these workshops will be to discuss in detail current trends and potential future issues associated with these sectors, including their need for ocean space, utilization of ocean resources, interaction with other ocean uses and resources, and other such topics. These workshops will thus help to refine specific issues associated with these sectors that relate directly to ocean planning and thus help to define more clearly specific topics for subsequent dialogue. Workshop attendees will include appropriate experts in these sectors as well as NROC members. NROC envisions these workshops as being a key opportunity to help identify and discuss specific issues which could be addressed in future ocean planning activities.

NROC recognizes that there are existing efforts already underway which may provide a vehicle for related discussions. Additionally, other non-governmental entities in the region and/or federal agencies with related responsibilities could also be partners in this effort from an expertise and/or cost perspective. Respondents are encouraged to consider the topics proposed for this task and identify opportunities to leverage related ongoing work.

The successful respondent will be responsible for logistics and other organizational aspects associated with designing such workshops: agenda development, identification of workshop

attendees and speakers, outreach to attendees to maximize participation, and venue selection and associated details. In addition to general workshop facilitation expertise, NROC also seeks proposals with team members who incorporate subject matter expertise to help enhance the success of these workshops. To maximize the utility of these workshops, the successful respondent will also be responsible for the development of pre-workshop material that would summarize the existing state of each of these sectors. The purpose of this material would be to provide background information for workshop attendees and to help frame the discussion topics for the workshops. Respondents should discuss their approach to developing such information, and describe the expertise that they would draw upon in order to do so. NROC anticipates working closely with the successful respondent to develop this information, agendas, participant lists, and other associated aspects of this task. In particular, state members of NROC will be an important partner in this effort.

NROC envisions that there will be one, or possibly two (depending on topic and budget), workshops conducted per each sector as necessary to ensure that any geographic differences in each issue area are appropriately addressed. NROC recognizes that the specific topics at individual workshops will be important to help determine the appropriate number of workshops and their locations. Respondents should discuss their approach to balancing the regional aspect of these workshops with the need to ensure appropriate subject matter representation. Decisions regarding the issues listed above—number and specific subject matter of workshops—will be made by NROC in conjunction with the successful respondent.

Task 2. Conduct workshops. For this task, the successful respondent will work closely with NROC to conduct workshops. Activities would include pre-workshop logistics, preparation of workshop materials, conducting and facilitating such workshops to ensure input from attendees, and developing workshop summaries. Respondents should describe their approach to facilitating such workshops. Workshop reports will also be prepared, summarizing proceedings and discussion/conclusions.

NROC anticipates that this round of initial workshops will result in the need for further engagement and dialogue. Thus, workshop reports will be expected to clearly identify further needs, areas for further discussion, and potential methods to address those needs. NROC also anticipates that information resulting from these workshops will be incorporated into NROC's overall ocean planning activities, including other public engagement activities.

Task 3. Workshop summary reports. For this task, the successful respondent will develop a written summary of workshop proceedings and conclusions. Presentations and discussion highlights will be a part of this summary. NROC expects that these summary reports will be due to NROC approximately four weeks following the workshops.

4. **Project Funding.** The maximum budget for this project is \$150,000. NROC anticipates that a sizeable portion of the budget (60-75%) for this project will be dedicated to holding the workshops (Task 2).

NROC anticipates that included in this budget will be assistance to support workshop attendee travel, as appropriate to the number and location of workshops. Respondents are encouraged to consider partners (within and outside of government) that could help defray costs associated with this work. NROC reserves the right to re-allocate this funding if a satisfactory candidate(s) for this service is not determined or the services are no longer needed.

5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include discussion of how the proposed approaches will successfully complete the following deliverables:
 - Detailed work plan
 - Draft and final workshop agendas and attendance/speaker lists, in conjunction with NROC
 - Printed sector-specific summary documentation as background/framework for workshops
 - Draft workshop reports for NROC review
 - Final workshop reports incorporating comments
6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following completion of a contract. NROC prefers a schedule that includes initial engagement with appropriate stakeholders in the spring of 2012, with workshops conducted in approximately a May-June 2012 timeframe, with workshop reports completed by August 2012. Respondents should propose and justify a schedule that they feel is appropriate.

Part 2: Proposal Preparation and Submittal

The following sections describe the procedures and content for submitting proposals.

1. **Pre-submittal conference call.** NROC will host a pre-submission conference call to allow potential respondents to ask clarifying questions on Wednesday, March 14, 2012. Instructions to participate in this conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email at least 24 hours before the conference call.
2. **RFP clarification.** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to the email contact below. The deadline for submitting such an email is 5:00 pm Wednesday, March 14, 2012. Responses will be posted to the NROC web-site on March 15, 2012. Questions should be sent to:

Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org

John Weber, Ocean Planning Director
Northeast Regional Ocean Council

3. **Submittal requirements.** For review purposes, NROC requires responses to this RFP to be delivered electronically, via email as an Adobe™ .pdf file, to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org. Proposals

must be received by email no later than 5:00 pm on Tuesday, March 20, 2012, and shall plainly identify the subject of the proposal and the name, phone, email, and address of the bidder.

It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that NROC receives the proposals prior to the specified closing date. Proposals received after the specified closing date will not be considered.

4. Content requirements. Proposals must be clear, succinct and shall not exceed 10 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, and table of contents do not count in the overall page count of the proposal. Exclusions to the page limitation may include relevant work samples and/or resumes, as described below, provided in appendices. Each bidder is required to describe how they will provide the deliverables described above as part of their proposal. Information provided will be evaluated and scored by NROC and, missing elements will adversely impact a proposal's overall score.

a. General requirements:

- i. Single-spaced pages when printed on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) with font not smaller than 11 point.
- ii. The total number of pages must not exceed 10 pages (not including appendices).
- iii. The proposal must be submitted as an Adobe™ .pdf document with all pages numbered and clearly identifying the name of the bidder.

b. Proposal organization and content:

- i. Cover letter. Provide a cover letter indicating your organization's commitment to implementing this initiative (.g. senior management approval, etc.). Also, include appropriate point of contact information, including the person's name, title, address, phone number and email address.
- ii. Table of contents. Identify page numbers of main sections, including any appendices.
- iii. Executive summary. Summarize the proposal's approach to completing the deliverables required by this RFP and highlight any competitive advantages or unique approaches of your proposal, cost-effectiveness measures, and particular skills offered by the project team.
- iv. Implementation plan. Include a concise, yet detailed implementation plan for completing the deliverables described in this RFP and to ensure appropriate management of the scope, schedule, budget and overall quality of work. Include a time line showing implementation, starting from contract execution, including all major tasks and their sequence, inter-relationships and dependencies between tasks and key milestones and deliverables.

- v. Detailed budget. Provide an itemized budget to produce the deliverables described in this RFP. Include all costs related to personnel (identify estimated hours and rate), administrative overhead, travel, materials, equipment, and any other anticipated expenditures required to complete the work described in this RFP. In this budget description, describe leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services. Note that because of the requirements of the source of funding for this project, indirect costs are limited to a maximum of 12.5% of allowable direct costs. For purposes of this RFP, indirect costs are defined as “overhead expenses incurred by an organization but not easily tracked to a specific project. They generally include administrative or other support functions such as executive oversight, institutional communication networks, accounting, grants management, legal support, insurance, utilities, technology, rent, and facility maintenance.” For purposes of this RFP, direct costs include all of the expenses that are required for, and can be tracked directly to, this project, including but not limited to personnel, consultants/contractors, or other direct expenses such as travel, training, supplies, computers, and software.

The total budget is not to exceed \$150,000.

- vi. Team structure and qualifications. Please provide the following:
- Project team organization chart, including a brief description of the role of each team member.
 - Summary of the experience, skill or unique attribute of each team member. Description of the team’s understanding of the technical aspects of this RFP will be very helpful in this summary. In addition, including a maximum two-page resume for each team member is allowable in a “resumes” appendix.
 - Summary of related, successful projects that illustrate the capabilities and qualifications of the project team. In addition, providing a maximum two-page description of up to two recently-completed projects is allowable in a “related experience” appendix. Include references that NROC may contact for these projects.

Proposals must identify any tasks which will be assigned to subcontractors and associated budget details include in part v above. The successful bidder will be required to not subcontract, assign, or transfer any listed responsibilities, without prior review and consent of NROC.

Part 3: Evaluation of Proposals

This section summarizes the general process and criteria NROC intends to use to evaluate proposals.

1. **General review process.** The NROC Ocean Planning Director will collect and assemble all proposals received by the RFP deadline. An evaluation team comprised of NROC members and the NROC Ocean Planning Director will be convened to evaluate and score all proposals, using the criteria

below. Upon completion of the scoring process, the evaluation team will recommend to the NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.

2. **Criteria.** NROC will use score all proposals according to the following criteria:

- a. *Approach* (30%). Bidders will be evaluated on the detail, clarity, and soundness of their approach to this project, including strategies for overcoming any potential obstacles, creativity, and cost effectiveness. Strategies for maximizing expert stakeholder involvement will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
- b. *Qualifications and experience of project team* (30%). NROC will evaluate a project team members' combination of education, training, and record of achievement and experience related to the tasks described in this RFP. Specific attention will also be focused on an assessment of a project team's direct experience with potential subject matter and with experts in pertinent fields.
- c. *Cost Effectiveness* (20%). Bidders will be evaluated on the budget submitted with their responses to this RFP. Any leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services, will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
- d. *Project Management* (20%). Bidders will be evaluated on their ability to complete the project within the schedule provided, track record of project management, and proposed project management strategies for this project. Because NROC is strongly urging teaming to address issues related to the geography of the project area (e.g., all of New England), this evaluation will also include an assessment of internal (within project team and between project team and NROC) communication/project management strategies which are proposed.

Part 4. General Provisions

The following general provisions apply to this RFP and subsequent actions taken by NROC.

1. Response to this RFP does not commit NROC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal.
2. NROC reserves the right to reject any or all of the proposals for completing this work. NROC also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP at any time.
3. NROC reserves the right to eliminate the need for the selected bidders to complete one or more tasks, pending the outcome of preceding related tasks or issues, and/or the availability of project partners to complete that task.
4. NROC reserves the right to modify the final scope of work and deliverables prior to finalizing a contractual agreement with the selected bidder(s).
5. Subsequent procurement, if any, will be in accordance with an executed contract. This RFP and any response may, at NROC's discretion, become part of the executed contract.

6. All entities participating in this RFP process will be notified of acceptance or rejection. NROC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for the rejection. NROC is not obligated to accept the proposal with the lowest cost.
7. No publicity or media release about this RFP, response to this RFP, discussion of any kind related to this RFP, or the award of any contract related to the bid document, may be released without NROC's prior approval.
8. All materials submitted by bidders become the property of NROC. NROC will retain copies of all proposals for historical records and documentation.
9. Each Bidder agrees to comply with all federal regulations including those pertaining to non-discrimination in hiring and employment practices.
10. NROC owns all rights to deliverables and, within the bounds of acceptable practice as determined by limitations placed upon data used in this project by data providers, intends that products resulting from this project will be made publically available.